

DIVISION: FORMS: 1 - 4AGE GROUP: 12 years plusS E R I E S: CURRENT AFFAIRSPROGRAMME (1)...: Edgar MittelholzerRECORDING TIME:TRANSMISSION: Wednesday, May 12, 1965 (2.46 - 2.58 p.m.)OPR:

NARR: Hello boys and girls,

Last week we the people of Guiana heard a bit of news which made us very sad. We heard that Edgar Mittelholzer was dead. But who was Edgar Mittelholzer? And why were we sad because of his death?

Well first of all Edgar Mittelholzer was a Guianese writer. In fact he was the first of modern Guianese writers to be known all over the world - not only in Guiana - for the books he wrote. He made people in Germany, Italy, France and countries much further away know about Guiana. You can say he helped to put Guiana on the map. You see, boys and girls, there was a time when people were so concerned about the big countries that they hardly ever thought about places like Guiana. But when they picked up one of the books of Mittelholzer and had read it through - then they wanted to know more about this country with its long rivers; and its thick bush and its canals and kokers. For you see Edgar Mittelholzer enjoyed writing about his country. He loved the rivers and the green mysterious bush and the rain and the thunder.

/In fact he.....



In fact he often made even Guianese look at their country with new eyes. For there are many people who missed these beautiful things - although they lived in the midst of them. But after they read Mittleholzer's description of them it helped them to see where their beauty lay. And that helps to explain why so many Guianese are sad at the news of his death - it wasn't only that Guiana had lost one of its famous writers - it was that he had taught many people to love Guiana more. But let's have a brief look at his life story, shall we? You know, boys and girls, in Guiana we have such a mixture of peoples that we hear names like Mittleholzer and

Van Sertima without batting an eyelid. Yet names like those often come from <sup>hundred</sup> two/hundreds of years ago - when Guiana was ruled by the Dutch. Some of the people owning plantations here were Swiss, Germans, Jews, Poles, Swedes as well as Dutch and British. And the first Mittleholzer we read about - the ancestor of Edgar Mittleholzer - came to Berbice from Switzerland and owned Plantation de Vreede (fifty miles up the river) round about 1760. Edgar always spoke about a sword which one of his uncles showed him when he was young. According to the story this first Mittleholzer had used the sword to defend himself in the Bush from the slaves who attacked him during the Berbice Slave Rebellion in 1763. So you see, boys and girls, Edgar Mittleholzer had history in his blood. Perhaps that is why he had to write about it. But let's get back to his life's story. He was born in New Amsterdam in 1909 - 56 years ago and he grew up like any other boy -

/except that.....



except that he noticed things around him a great deal more than other boys - the dark corners of a house and the gloom among the rafters in the high roof at night had a particular way of attracting him. Spiders <sup>frightened</sup> frightened him and he found himself dreaming about the old plantations in the bush two hundred years ago.

Soon he discovered he like writing. He wasn't particularly brilliant at school. He couldn't work up an interest in many of the subjects at school - But he liked writing. He used to fill exercise book after exercise book with stories of mystery. He invented a character called Dr. Wong Fu who was the head of a very clever band of criminals.

When he left school he began to write short stories and to put them off to various magazines - to see if they would publish them. But here his troubles began. Many, many times he sent stories off to the magazines Editors and many, many times they were returned. Then he began writing whole novels. Off they would go to the publishers - and back they would come. The amazing thing is that he never gave up - he just went straight on writing. At last one of his novels was published. "Corentyne Thunder" and then another - "Morning at the Office" It was this second book which made him famous. It was written about the people in an office in Trinidad. Mittleholzer had gone to Trinidad during the Second World War to work at the Naval Base there. He had observed Trinidad very carefully and this book "Morning at the Office"

/showed how.....



showed how very careful his observations were. After Trinidad he went to live in England, and then came back to the West Indies to live in Barbados. Then he went back to England where he lived until his death.

OPR:

M U S I C    B R E A K

NARR:

Perhaps the books that Guianese will remember him most for are the three novels about the history of this country - Children of <sup>Ky-wana</sup> Kaywana, The Harrowing of Hubertus and Kaywana Blood. Perhaps you will soon be reading these books: The first of them begins in the closing years of the sixteenth century when English and Dutch Adventurers were coming to Guiana coast to see what they could find. The last of them ends in 1953. They are really the history of one family - the Van Groenwegel. The first Van Groenwegel married an Amerindian lady named Kaywana - so they are a mixed breed. And as this story unfolds you also see the story of Guyana. The Berbice Slave insurrection is told with all the fear and excitement and violence that went with it. He makes you almost see the planters being rowed by their slaves up and down the rivers in their tent boats. He tells you about their meals that lasted for hours - when every kind of tasty food could be eaten - European foods and pepper pot. He gives you a picture of the way Georgetown grew up and he tells you how the planters felt when slavery was abolished. And all the while he is doing this he makes you feel the mystery of the dark creeks, and the strange world of the

/bush and he makes.....



bush and he makes you listen once again to the well-known sound of frogs croaking near the rivers and crickets chirping. But he didn't only write books about Guiana. Some of his books are about people in England and their problems and what they believed in. In fact he wrote some twenty books in all - and his books are always full of unusual people, and unusual happenings. He himself was an unusual person. He was very interested in religion and how it affects the lives of people. He was himself a religious man in a strange way - he liked Eastern religions and he liked their feeling of mystery. But he also believed that in life only the strong people - not the soft people - really do great things. Perhaps this came because he knew that in Old Guiana you had to be very strong to battle against the bush and the fevers and the difficulty of making a living. He certainly knew the importance of struggling to get what you want. Perhaps that is what he can teach us, boys and girls - not to give up when things go wrong the first or the second or the third time. He also taught us that Guiana has a most interesting history. But we must <sup>go</sup> ~~to~~ in search of it and use our imagination as he did - that is the way to discover what riches we have in store for us.

OPR:

PLAY THEME: